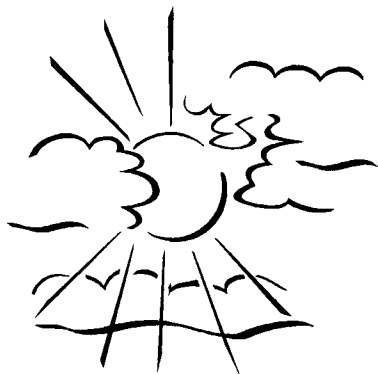


***Department  
of  
Human  
Services***

Prepared by the  
DHS Office of  
Communications  
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# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Friday, December 9, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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## **AUDIT CRITICAL OF D.H.S. FINANCIAL CONTROLS**

Auditors have urged the Department of Human Services to change some of its programs to give it more control over its finances. But in several cases, they noted they had made the same recommendations two and three times previous to no avail.

The financial audit of the department by Auditor General Thomas McTavish for the period October 1, 2002 through September 30, 2004 was unqualified overall, but in seven program areas auditors gave the department an adverse rating and questioned some of the expenses reported.

Maureen Sorbet, Human Services spokesperson, said some 80 percent of the questioned costs had already been resolved by the time the audit was released Thursday. "The other 20 percent really relate to our lack of staff," Ms. Sorbet said.

Most of the questions raised by auditors dealt not with money actually missing or improperly spent, but with all the paperwork not completed to show that the expenditures were correct, Ms. Sorbet said. "This is not about fraud or misuse of funds," she said.

The findings could lead to some federal fines and sanctions, but Ms. Sorbet said the department was negotiating those with federal officials. But she said federal officials also acknowledged the progress the department has made and noted human services departments in other states are facing similar issues.

Among the issues the auditors raised was misstatements of federal spending, the third consecutive time the issue had been raised. The audit said the department, for fiscal year 2003-04, overstated the amount of federal money it spent by \$37.2 million and understated how much it passed to subrecipients by \$38.9 million. For FY 2002-03, those amounts were \$23.6 million and \$79.5 million, respectively.

The overstatements, the audit said, were a combination of reporting spending that did not qualify as expenditures of federal awards and failure to properly reconcile accounts. The understatements related to improperly classifying payments as payments to vendors that were actually distributions to subrecipients.

Auditors had found in three previous audits that DHS workers were not ensuring that case files were completed properly to show eligibility for federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families. Those three prior audits had also found that case workers were not sanctioning

recipients who did not cooperate in obtaining child support orders for their children and were not ensuring that recipients were eligible for childcare funds they received.

The two prior audits had cited the department for not ensuring that those not cooperating with work requirements were being sanctioned and those sanctions recorded.

Those prior two audits had also cited the department for not ensuring that staff documented eligibility for refugee funds

Several findings had also been repeated just from the prior audit.

Ms. Sorbet said the department was working to address those issues, including a new computer system, Bridges, which would automate much of the case file process.

*MIRS*

*December 8, 2005*

## **Audit Questions 12 Percent Of DHS' Federal Grants**

Roughly 12 percent of the \$5.5 billion in federal awards the Department of Human Services (DHS) administered in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 and FY 2004 were called into question today by the Auditor General, putting the sanction-prone department at risk of being hit with even more federal penalties in the future.

From FY 1996-04, DHS lost \$42 million to federal penalties and is expecting to pay another \$22 million in fines in FY 2006. In addition, the department is on the hook for another \$7.5 million in FY 2009. However, DHS officials point out that many of the problems laid out in today's audit are systemic issues dating back at least eight years.

They point out that under the direction of Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** and DHS Director Marianne **UDOW**, 80 percent of the \$675 million in questionable costs pointed out in the recent audit have been corrected in the past year and they are continuing to work on the rest of the costs despite a lack of resources and an overburdened staff.

"It is difficult to make corrections when you have those issues and the current budget climate puts the department at a disadvantage in this area," said DHS Spokesman Maureen **SORBET**. "We are going to make this a priority and address the concerns laid out here. We do take this seriously and we are taking steps to make the changes we can make."

The Auditor General said DHS (formerly the Family Independence Agency) did not comply with federal laws and regulations on how it handled federal money for eight of the 16 programs it administers. Also, the audit says staff responsible for a specific federal program was not sufficiently aware of how it worked or what the federal requirements were.

In issuing its 180-page audit, encompassing 23 findings, the Auditor General repeatedly noted that several of the findings were concerns brought up in two, three or four audits prior. Asked specifically about the repeat concerns, Sorbet noted that many of the issues the audit brought up are complex issues that aren't solved necessarily quickly, especially when staff workers are torn between helping a family onsite or taking care of paperwork.

Also, she noted that the audit released today covered a time period that started under the Gov. John **ENGLER** administration and ended more than a year ago, which means there will be some matters brought up in this audit that likely will be brought up again in the FY 2005-06 audit to be issued in FY 2007 because of the coverage overlap.

Sorbet noted that all of the findings deal with how the DHS handles paperwork. No accusations of fraud or misuse of funds have been levied. What was brought up in today's audit is not dissimilar to issues being brought up in audits of similar agencies in Ohio and other states.

The audit pointed out several findings of note, the first dealing with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) money. DHS did not have documentation proving that 34 percent of

those people whose files were reviewed actually had qualified for government assistance or the amount they were receiving.

It also found that 22 percent of the time, those not cooperating with paternity and child support orders were still receiving their full check, even though the federal government mandates that the payment be cut 25 percent. Also in 13 percent of the cases, there is no proof that those recipients who refuse to participate in the work programs have had their assistance terminated, as is required.

DHS is expecting to be forced to pay \$22 million in federal fines related to how it interpreted who qualified for federal foster care money, which totaled \$9 million in questioned costs in FY 2003 and 2004.

In May, the DHS was hit with a \$7.5 million penalty for not going after people on child support and paternity establishment issues. DHS sent USHHS a corrective action plan in July, saying it would take care of the problem by the end of 2008. If the department could take care of the situation, the fine would go away. If not, the state would need to take \$7.5 million out of its General Fund to pay off the fine.

Published December 9, 2005  
[ From the Lansing State Journal ]

## **Agreement close on welfare reform Strict penalties, four-year limit still concern state Dems**

By Amy F. Bailey  
Associated Press

Republican lawmakers appear to have resolved many of their differences over ways to improve the state's welfare program, but Democrats still have concerns about a four-year limit on benefits and strict penalties in the legislation.

The House and Senate, both controlled by the GOP, voted Thursday to approve legislation that reflects much of their agreement. But a final vote on the welfare reform legislation, which would send it to Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm, is not expected until next week.

A number of Democrats in both chambers voted against the bills. Some said the state should have the flexibility to continue distributing cash assistance to recipients on the rolls longer than four years in certain cases.

Granholm has said four years should be enough time for adults who can work to move from the welfare rolls to employment, but she does not want the same limits for those who are disabled, taking care of a disabled relative or mentally ill.

"But there are very few if any of those individuals left in the welfare system today," Marianne Udow, director of the Department of Human Services, said earlier this week. "We believe that the majority of those who are in the system are there because they are vulnerable (and) because they have huge barriers."

Republicans agreed to a new three-strike policy for recipients who fail to comply with work or training requirements. The first and second offenses would mean 90 days without cash assistance, and a third strike would mean a two-year ban on aid.

Democrats, however, think the two-year prohibition on aid is too harsh.

"It hurts not just the recipient but the family as well," said Rep. Chris Kolb, an Ann Arbor Democrat who is helping negotiate terms of the bills. "These are families who benefit from this. In many cases, there are more than one child and many under the age of 12."

The four-year clock on receiving cash assistance would continue to run when welfare recipients have been kicked off the system under the Republican agreement. Democrats do not like that provision.

Republicans and Democrats have agreed on provisions in the legislation that would provide more education and job training to welfare recipients to help move them into jobs that pay more than minimum wage.

Kolb said he was concerned about new language that would require recipients taking college courses to get a 2.5 GPA and attend 90 percent of their classes to continue receiving aid.



## **HOUSE, SENATE TRADE OFF WELFARE BILLS**

A major package of bills instituting new reforms in Michigan's welfare system by setting a lifetime limit of 48-months worth of cash assistance for most able-bodied adults took another series of steps towards Governor Jennifer Granholm.

Both the House and Senate acted on bills that would replace the state's current welfare rules that are now due to expire on December 31. The bills have not yet gone to Ms. Granholm and legislative action on them is expected to be finished Tuesday.

However, waiting in the wings is SB 757, passed 35-0 in the Senate, which extends the current welfare rules by one year and its twin HB 4121, which is on second reading in the House. The sunset extension is needed, according to Republican officials, in case problems occur with the package (like the possibility of a veto).

A spokesperson for Ms. Granholm said the governor considers the package a work in progress.

And while she endorsed a 48-month limit on benefits on able-bodied individuals who have no impediments to finding work, earlier this week she said in a letter that she did not think lifetime limits were appropriate for those who had some issues preventing them from attaining self-sufficiency.

Some changes were enacted to the package, especially on the Senate side, that provide some changes to allow individuals to continue receiving benefits.

But the Senate refused to amend the bills in its possession to give the Department of Human Services the ability to extend the time limit for benefits in individual cases where it felt the action justified.

The Senate – which passed HB 5438 on a 24-12 vote, HB 5439 by 35-0, HB 5440 by 24-11, HB 5441 by 24-11 and HB 5442 by 35-0 – also rejected proposed amendments that would apply the time limits prospectively and which would not count any time a person may have been on welfare in another state towards the 48-month limit.

Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood) said the package allowed for enough pauses and options to protect a person who needed additional help.



Essentially, the package sets a lifetime limit of 48 months of cash welfare benefits for able-bodied individuals. They would still be eligible to receive other benefits like food assistance and heating assistance.

Individuals would have to get a plan to work towards self-sufficiency. One of the most controversial aspects of the package is a "three-strikes" provision that will suspend benefits if a person does not meet the requirements of their self-sufficiency plan. For the first two infractions, a person would lose benefits for three months each. For the third infraction, a person would lose benefits for two years. That 30-month time period would count against the person's 48-month limit; so in the case of a person who violated his or her plan egregiously, that person may be eligible for just 18 months of cash benefits.

The proposal does allow a person to apply for a 12-month extension of benefits beyond the 48 months if they are meeting all the requirements of their plan and depressed local economic conditions prevent employment. The proposal also suspends the 48-month clock any month that unemployment in the person's resident county exceeds 10 percent.

If the package becomes law, any person who already had been on welfare for 36 months or longer would have to get a self-sufficiency plan within 30 days.

The package was amended by the Senate to allow for persons who are victims of domestic abuse or dealing with other exemptions, such as illness and handicaps, from the lifetime limit.

On the House side, arguments erupted over the 48-month limit, three-strike rule and a requirement for recipients receiving post-secondary education to maintain a 2.5 grade-point average and 90 percent attendance record.

"Every family that receives cash assistance has different issues before them," Rep. Chris Kolb (D-Ann Arbor) said. "You can be working and not making enough money and you could get kicked off of cash assistance (because of time limit)."

But Rep. Jerry Kooiman (R-Grand Rapids), the lead House Republican on the issue, said changes to the package are ever continuous, but that there needs to be an end point for able-bodied recipients to get off the system.

"I was hoping today we would be there (to a consensus)," he said, adding that there are still talks on how to transition people off the system.

There also is not consensus it seems on how many days, or years, should apply to the three-strike rule. House Democrats think the two-year sanction is too much, and negotiations to lower it back down are still underway.

There does seem to be an agreement, perhaps solely because the issue is so complicated, on how Supplemental Security Income will be factored in to eligibility assessment.

It seems the administration has proposed bringing all six of the shelter areas, which are scattered across the state, onto cash assistance payment rate, instead of using individual SSI amounts. The proposal basically is equivalent to having a 20 percent SSI factor into eligibility, as opposed to the House initiative of 100 percent.

Mr. Kooiman said that proposal was intriguing to Republican leaders.

However, there are some members of the House Democratic Caucus who simply do not believe the reforms will help Michigan residents.

"It's so hypocritical for us to want to streamline things for business but not for the people on the bottom," said Rep. George Cushingberry (D-Detroit).

Speaking on the post-secondary education requirement that calls for a 2.5 grade-point average and 90 percent attendance rate for welfare recipients receiving education assistance, Mr. Cushingberry said, "I think there are people who serve in the White House, Congress and this body who did maintain a 2.5 average."

He continued to say that the system should be reverted to President Richard Nixon's proposal for simple, guaranteed income for everybody. Mr. Cushingberry said he worried the reforms would lead to more crime and a lack of assistance to the neediest of the state's residents.

When the time came, some House Democrats voted on a sliding scale of dissention. Republicans all voted in support for the bills, except for Rep. Fulton Sheen (R-Plainwell) who was absent from the votes on the package. The House passed the bills as follows: SB 892 (76-25), SB 893 (82-19) and SB 894 (87-14).

## **Welfare Agreement, Are You Out There?**

Both the House and Senate deliberated what to change, what to keep and what to add to each other's Welfare amendment bills, but no one's quite sure what the final bills will look like.

"The legislation is going back to the Senate and the Senate is sending the House bills back to us," said House Majority Spokesman Matt **RESCH**. "These bills don't necessarily reflect the final agreement."

The House's point person on the welfare issue, Rep. Jerry **KOOIMAN** (R-Grand Rapids) gave reporters a general overview of what the legislation may ultimately look like based on agreements between the House and Senate.

Kooiman's estimate on final sanctions for not following through with aid requirements — the first and second being no aid for three months and the third being no aid for two years — was right on target with what the Senate passed. The time lost during the sanctions would count against the 48-month limit.

The Senate passed HB 5441, sponsored by Rep. David **FARHAT** (R-Muskegon), basically along party lines, with a 24-11 vote, reflecting Democratic sentiments that the sanctions, as well as other pieces of the bill, should allow for more flexibility and Department of Human Services (DHS) autonomy.

A similar bill, SB 0893, sponsored by Sen. Alan **CROPEY** (R-DeWitt), passed on a party line 57-44 vote in the House.

Kooiman also estimated that the two chambers would come to some kind of agreement on what could exempt an able-bodied person from having to adhere to the 48-month lifetime aid rule.

The House doesn't know what it wants to do with these exemptions but the Senate does. Senate Republicans want people who are currently considered "vulnerable" — victims of domestic violence, those over 65 and the disabled — to continue being considered vulnerable, which would exempt them from the 48-month lifetime rule.

Senate Republicans don't want the DHS to have the authority to decide who can bypass the 12-month extension that could be awarded to some people who have gone over the 48-month rule. Democrats do.

Kooiman suggested that the House would like to see some sort of provisions to protect the children of recipients that have sanctions pressed against them or hit the 48-month limit. This protection could have been included in the Senate's revised version of the House bills if an amendment offered by Sen. Gilda **JACOBS** (D-Ann Arbor) had passed.

Kooiman said the top issue that remains to be wrestled with is preparing recipients meeting the 48-month rule for the transition back into the working, non-funded world.

The Senate somewhat addressed this before sending its three-bill package to the House by including a provision that would require the DHS to explain other social services those forced to go off Welfare could use.

Today the Senate also made a substitute to Kooiman's bill, HB 5438, that would require any able-

bodied person who has been on Welfare for 36 months or more at the time the bills go into law, to make a new Family Self Sufficiency Plan within 30 days. The idea behind this was to help those forced off Welfare transition back into the non-funded world.

Jacobs wanted to pass an amendment on HB 5438 that would prevent making the 48-month rule retroactive so those who are near the 48-limit could start over once the law is instated. Her amendment did not pass and HB 5438 passed virtually along party lines with a 24-12 vote.

The Senate agreed to reduce the number of categories Social Security Income (SSI) is administered under from eight to two. This bill, HB 5439, sponsored by Rep. Rick SHAFFER (R-Three Rivers), passed unanimously. Kooiman said the House wants to do something similar, however it seems to think there are six, not eight categories.

Another major difference between Senate and House versions is a 50 percent earning disregard put in HB 5442 by the House and taken out by the Senate. The idea behind the regard is that people would be able to keep more of the money they make with the hope that keeping the money will motivate them to find employment.

The Senate revised HB 5442 in committee by knocking the earning down back to its current 20 percent and creating a substitute that asks the department to do a study on the cost of raising the disregard to 50 percent by April 2006. This passed unanimously.

Both chambers and both parties do agree that education and training should be increased according to whatever new guidelines they come up with.

If the House, Senate and administration can't agree, there's always SB 0757, sponsored by Sen. Shirley JOHNSON (R-Royal Oak). SB 0757 is a fallback bill that will extend the Welfare sunset from Dec. 31 of this year to Dec. 31, 2006 so the factions can continue working on welfare reform. This passed unanimously.

The House passed SB 0894 sponsored by Sen. Irma CLARK-COLEMAN (D-Detroit) on an 87-14 vote and SB 0892, sponsored by Sen. Bill HARDIMAN (R-Kentwood), on a 76-25 vote. Only Democrats voted no.

The Senate also passed HB 5440, sponsored by Rep. Tom PEARCE (R-Rockford) 24-11. HB 5443, sponsored by Rep. Leslie MORTIMER (R-Jackson), HB 5444, sponsored by John STAHL (R-North Branch), HB 5445, sponsored by Pearce and HB 5446, sponsored by Rep. Chris KOLB (D-Ann Arbor) were not passed out of committee on the grounds that the issues they address are already in the Senate version of the bills.

Johnson and Sen. Martha G. SCOTT (D-Highland Park) were absent and Sen. Michael PRUSI (D-Ishpeming) was absent during the welfare package votes.  
[http://www.mirsnews.com/leg\\_bio.php?lid=146](http://www.mirsnews.com/leg_bio.php?lid=146)

# Slow down rush to reform welfare, get cracking on jobs

Bay City Times Editorial

Friday, December 9, 2005

The Michigan Legislature is in a last-minute frenzy to adopt the most sweeping changes to state welfare programs since the early days of the Engler administration.

It's strange that legislators can find time to force able-bodied adults to find work, but still can't manage to help the businesses that might employ those workers.

The state House of Representatives was voting at a dead run late the night of Dec. 1, when it passed a package of welfare reform bills introduced just 10 days before.

The Senate, too, quickly pushed through three welfare-reform bills on Dec. 1. Those bills were introduced just a few weeks before, on Nov. 10.

What's the rush?

Some welfare reform provisions are due to expire at the end of this year.

So legislators are hurrying to meet that deadline.

They shouldn't.

Not on proposals designed to take welfare payments away from able-bodied adults after four years. Not when the entire state is poised to slide toward a job-robbing crash of its manufacturing sector.

The sentiment behind these last-minute proposals is solid. People who are able to work ought to work.

But what if there is no work?

House and Senate members have for almost a year delayed serious work on Gov. Jennifer Granholm's proposed business tax changes designed to help manufacturers stay in the state.

House and Senate conferees should delay final talks on welfare reform. Both houses of the Legislature should vote to continue current welfare programs for a few more months.

And they both need to get cracking on measures that would help employers stay in business.

Only then does it make sense to insist that every able-bodied person find work.

Once there is work.

A8

# OPINION

## THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

FOUNDED IN 1835

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# Proper welfare reform could be good for all

## Fair, workable laws are key to success

Toughening Michigan's welfare program, specifically limiting cash assistance for the able-bodied to four years, is justifiable reform if carried out correctly.

To their credit, lawmakers who've pushed this policy in bills passing the House and Senate appear to have taken into account how hard it will be to get many on welfare into lasting employment.

Equally gratifying is that no one is trying to score political points by denigrating this population, or naively expecting that removing some of the 78,000 Michigan households on assistance will immediately save money. Realistically, the mentoring, education and training, assistance with child care and removal of other barriers preventing people from holding jobs might even cost more initially.

But ending dependency for a few thousand families — the apparent objective — would be a huge achievement. Their lives would be immeasurably improved and the burden society bears because of their predicament would be lightened.

If the Republican-sponsored legislation gains final approval and is signed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, harsh penalties would visit those who fail to comply with work or training requirements. In fact, the House bill requires a lifetime banishment from the welfare program after a third offense. Such stern consequences are necessary, say reform proponents, because the current situation — a 90-day loss of benefits —

it both chambers endorsed represents a stark change from present policy, which has no such cap. That makes Michigan a rarity among states, and therefore invites this fix. But it also puts heavy onus on lawmakers to draft fair and workable reforms, as well as on agencies this clientele depends upon.

Chief among these are job-training outfits set up to give welfare recipients essential education and other employability skills. Scrutiny of their performance must be as unforgiving as it is for welfare clients who shrug off state mandates.

Elsewhere, there must be sufficient caseworkers in the state Departments of Human Services and Labor and Economic Growth to create the personal development plans for welfare clients the reform legislation calls for.

Without such mentoring and other basic help, a functionally illiterate person with a spotty job history is probably doomed. The same can be said for these generally thoughtful reforms, which wisely would increase financial rewards for working as opposed to collecting government aid.

Further reducing the welfare caseload, already more than halved the past decade, is a complicated engineering job, requiring a full understanding of every obstacle involved. Lawmakers seem to be on the right track, but a wrong turn could derail this journey toward a noble goal.



## LETTERS

### Don't let Congress so-called 'Patriot'

It became federal law last Sept. 11, 2001, consisting of 500 pages and approved in a hurry. At the time the law was that our government trusted to use discretion in using the extra powers to spy on its citizens turned out to be a mistake. It is now up for renewal and lawmakers are insisting on checks and balances plus deletion of sections that tres-

# Religious activists protest lawmaker

PUBLISHED: December 9, 2005

By Chad Selweski  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A small group of religious activists protested outside U.S. Rep. Candice Miller's Shelby Township district office Thursday, decrying the congresswoman's support for "immoral" budget cuts that they say will hurt the poor and defy Christian values.

"Yes, we have a religious motivation, a Christian motivation. This budget doesn't reflect Christian ethics," said the Rev. David Buersmeyer, pastor of Saints John and Paul Catholic Church in Washington Township. "But I think all Americans should oppose this budget."

The Republican-sponsored deficit-reduction bill opposed by the group would cut \$50 billion from programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, student loans and child support collections. At the same time, the House on Thursday extended \$56 billion worth of tax cuts on investment income -- capital gains and stock dividends -- to 2010.

A leader of Thursday's protest, Charles Rooney, chairman of the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, said lawmakers are taking money from the needy and funneling it into a tax bill that will largely benefit those making \$200,000 a year or more.

"There is a priority for protecting the needy. It was Jesus' priority. He himself was among the poor," said Rooney, who cited Scripture to make his point. "This is the most central function of the state, to provide for our most needy."

One protester carried a sign that said Congress was transferring federal funds from "the neediest to the greediest."

Similar protests by religious groups, particularly Catholics, have been waged in Republican congressional districts across the nation over the past month. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter's Livonia office was picketed by the group on Wednesday and Rep. Joe Knollenberg's Farmington Hills office was targeted a week ago.

Miller, reached for an interview at her Washington office, said she admired the passion displayed by the dozen protesters who braved Thursday's frigid temperatures. But she said those walking the picket line are out of step with her district.

"My constituents say that spending is out of control in Washington and we need to get a handle on the deficit," said Miller, a Harrison Township

Republican who represents most of Macomb County north of Metropolitan Parkway. "I would say the majority of the people in my district would say \$50 billion (in cuts) is not enough."

Critics estimate that the budget cuts would affect hundreds of thousands of recipients of Medicaid, food stamps, child support and federal student loans over the next 10 years. Miller counters that those programs were scheduled to grow by 6.3 percent in 2006 and would still grow by 6 percent under the GOP bill.

"We're not cutting at all. We're slowing the growth," she said. "I feel we have been a compassionate country. For example, we have doubled the spending for food stamps in the past five years."

As the budget bill approaches final approval, the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights and Catholics for the Common Good hope their pressure on Miller, McCotter and Knollenberg could tip the scales.

The legislation initially passed the House on Nov. 18 with just two votes to spare, by a 217-215 margin.



*Dec 9, 8:45 AM EST*

*AP*

*Detroit News*

## Michigan shelters fill in cold snap, snow closes schools

DETROIT (AP) -- Unseasonably cold weather, followed by a storm that dumped more than half a foot of snow on parts of Michigan's Lower Peninsula, helped fill homeless shelters and forced dozens of schools to close Friday, authorities say.

Several Detroit shelters said they were at or above capacity Thursday, and those in Mount Clemens, Pontiac and Warren said they expected to reach capacity soon.

"We were housing between 60 and 85 women and children (overnight), and the city suggested we house 25," said the Rev. Faith Fowler, executive director of the Cass Community Center. It operates five shelters in Detroit. She said her program "is more than just opening the doors. It's providing transportation, security, food, showers and laundry. ... But we don't turn anyone away. I am not going to let someone freeze."

At the Detroit Rescue Mission, the normal capacity of 80 beds was exceeded by more than 20 Thursday, and some people slept on mattresses on the floor, The Detroit News said.

"We're taking people in as we speak," David Merciez, who works at Macomb's Answer to Temporary Shelter in Warren, said Thursday. "If we aren't full tonight, we will be within a day or two and we will have to turn them away."

A snowstorm swept into the Lower Peninsula on Thursday. By about 5 a.m. Friday, it had left 7.8 inches of snow in the Monroe County community of Maybee, about 25 miles north of Toledo, Ohio, the National Weather Service said. It said Oakland County's White Lake Township received 6.2 inches of snow, while Sterling Heights and Utica got 6 inches. Dozens of school districts canceled classes Friday. Among them was the state's largest, the 130,600-student Detroit Public Schools.

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# Warming center for homeless not ready

By: Michelle Swartz

*Monroe News*

*story updated December 09, 2005*

*11:24AM*

As snow falls on Monroe County, plans for a warming and cooling center for the homeless continue to develop.

The snow beat the Salvation Army to the punch.

As snow falls on Monroe County, plans for a warming and cooling center for the homeless continue to develop.

"Our next step is to submit a site plan," said Major Jimmy Wilson of the Salvation Army. "We are following the city's steps before we're authorized to use it. We're hoping to do that quickly because of the weather.

"If we don't get it done this winter, we'll have something in line next winter."

The Salvation Army developed a pilot program that offers the homeless a place to stay when the weather turns extremely cold or hot. The center would be located at Salvation Army's Corps Community Center, 1018 E. Second St. It would be open on days when it's most dangerous for homeless people to be outside.

Salvation Army officials have been following the necessary steps needed to open the center.

"So far, it's been a smooth process, so we hope to open as soon as possible," he said. "We're confident it will work out."

It can't happen soon enough; Family Manor, Salvation Army's homeless shelter, is at full capacity with 36 residents.

"We are usually at full capacity, plus another 15 families are on the waiting list," Major Wilson said. "We rarely find ourselves with an empty bed. At this point, there's not a lot we can do. That's why the warming and cooling center is such a critical project for us."

Several Detroit shelters said they were at or above capacity Thursday, and those in Mount Clemens, Pontiac and Warren said they expected to reach capacity soon.

At the Detroit Rescue Mission, the normal capacity of 80 beds was exceeded by more than 20 Thursday, and some people slept on mattresses on the floor.

# **Slick roads, delayed flights mark winter's chilly arrival**

## **Homeless struggle to stay warm**

Oralandar Brand-Williams and Norman Sinclair / The Detroit News

The first snowstorm of the season swept across southeastern Michigan overnight slowing traffic, delaying flights at Metro Airport and sending some local homeless shelters -- already filled past capacity -- scrambling to find more room for the needy.

The snow, accompanied by single digit temperatures, began falling about 7 p.m. in Metro Detroit and was expected to increase to about 2 inches an hour between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m., said David Shuler, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in White Lake Township.

The storm system, caused by a low pressure system over the Plains drawing up moisture from the Gulf of Mexico, could dump 5 inches to 8 inches of snow locally and up to 10 inches in some areas of southeastern Michigan before it moves out.

Local and county road agencies were well prepared for the storm and salt trucks and plows were out shortly after the snow began falling.

"This is a convenient storm," said Lorenzo Blount, acting director of Wayne County roads. "It started after rush hour and is expected to stop before rush hour. It gives us time to get out there and work while people are not on the road."

The Road Commission for Oakland County also had its trucks ready to roll.

"We dodged the bullet by the storm hitting just after the rush hour," said Craig Bryson, spokesman for the road commission. "We put about 65 to 70 trucks out of the roads immediately and we'll increase that to about 120 after 2 a.m. to get ready for the rush hour. If the snow will taper off by then, we should be in good shape."

Detroit Metropolitan Airport was keeping up with the snow Thursday night, too. The airport reported no serious problems, but said there was 15-to-20 minute delay, but that is no unusual because of the steady downpour of snow.

Snow emergencies were issued in Wayne, Westland, Allen Park Garden City and Taylor. In Wayne cars parked on city residential streets were ticketed if not moved in four hours. And, if not moved within eight hours, the cars were towed, said Wayne Police Lt. Keith Thomas.

The snow was good for business at the Hungry Howie's pizza parlor on Nine Mile in Ferndale, said the manager Brian Maurer. He said business went up 25 percent once the heavy snow started falling.

"Most people don't want to go out, so they stay in and call," Maurer said.

Detroit shelters say they're already at capacity, while sites in Pontiac, Warren and Mount Clemens say they expect to reach capacity as early as today as a low pressure system brought heavy snow into the area overnight.

This week's early blast of unseasonably cold weather and snow, combined with a loss of donations and government funding, has social service agencies struggling two weeks before the official start of winter.

The nonprofit operations also are being hit by rising energy costs.

Cass Community Center operates five shelters in Detroit for up to 200 people, including an overnight warming facility for women and children.

The Rev. Faith Fowler, executive director of the center, said she is especially worried about women and children who need overnight refuge. The \$65,000 the center received from the city a year ago for this service was slashed to \$40,000 this winter as part of the Detroit budget crisis. Two years ago, the center received \$80,000.

"We were housing between 60 and 85 women and children (overnight), and the city suggested we house 25," Fowler said. "But (our service) is more than just opening the doors. It's providing transportation, security, food, showers and laundry, so there are some costs involved. The \$40,000 barely covers food and security. But we don't turn anyone away. I am not going to let someone freeze."

But the snow and cold make it even more difficult for the shelters.

Fowler said taking in homeless children adds a special burden.

"With children, it's more complicated because they go to school all over the city," she said. "A homeless child is allowed to go to his or her school, which is a very good thing, but on a morning where we have 20 to 25 kids, we would be running all over town."

Normally, the city takes in homeless men, women and children at the Stone Pool recreation center at the Lodge Freeway and Forest. The men are taken to shelters that can accommodate them, and the women and children go to Cass Community's warming shelter at 11850 Woodrow Wilson.

Still, Fowler pledged to take any women and children who turned up.

At the Detroit Rescue Mission at 3535 Third Street, the normal capacity of 80 beds was stretched to more than 100 Thursday, with mattresses placed on the floor for the overflow.

A disturbing trend in those seeking shelter are entire families who are homeless, said Chad Audi, the chief operating officer of the Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries that operates the Third Street facility.

"We can't put them up as a family and must separate the men from the wife and kids," Audi said.

"This is exactly the opposite of what we do since we try to unite not divide families."

Audi said while some of their funding through the Department of Housing and Urban Development is assured, the area's poor economic condition is reflected in a drop of in donations, leaving the ministries strapped to take in and feed 250-260 persons nightly.

While the need is most acute in Detroit, suburban shelters are reporting that they still have beds available.

In Pontiac at the Grace Center of Hope, the former Rescue Mission run by the Grace Fellowship Church still had room for those seeking shelter.

"Surprisingly, we are not at capacity even though we have picked up a few more people this week," said Tom Hawley.

There was also room at the temporary shelter on Nine Mile in Warren.

"We're taking people in as we speak. If we aren't full tonight, we will be within a day or two and we will have to turn them away," said David Merciez, who works at MATTS, or Macomb's Answer to Temporary Shelter.

*Detroit News Staff Writer David G. Grant contributed to this report. You can reach Norman Sinclair at (313) 222-2034 or [nsinclair@detnews.com](mailto:nsinclair@detnews.com).*

Posted on Fri, Dec. 09, 2005

BY MARC CAPUTO

[mcaputo@herald.com](mailto:mcaputo@herald.com)

Miami Herald

## HEALTHCARE

# Medicaid to undergo 'the boldest reform' in HMO experiment

**Gov. Jeb Bush's plan to make Medicaid operate more like private insurance won approval from the Legislature. It will be tested in Broward.**

**TALLAHASSEE** - From people with AIDS and diabetes to children and the seriously disabled, most of Broward County's poorest and most fragile residents will be subjects of a nationally watched experiment to reshape Medicaid, after the Florida Legislature voted Thursday to turn over some control of the program to private companies.

"What the Legislature has done today is the single biggest change and the boldest reform since the beginning of Medicaid," Gov. Jeb Bush, who proposed the plan, said of the 40-year-old program that serves 2.2 million Floridians.

The plan, starting in Broward and Duval counties in July, puts the state on a five-year course to enroll nearly all of its Medicaid recipients into HMO-like managed-care companies. The firms will have unprecedented say in defining benefits that the government now decides.

Bush says the free-market fix should help control spiraling costs for Medicaid, which tops \$15 billion and is nearly a quarter of the state's budget. Socked by higher enrollment numbers and healthcare inflation -- especially from prescription drugs -- states across the nation have experienced similar trouble, and many are looking to Florida for a solution.

Bush promised reform will bring more budget "predictability" because some costs will be capped. He said managed-care plans save money -- and improve health care -- by providing recipients regular therapy and check-ups to spot and treat ailments early and more cheaply.

But to 34-year-old Anita King of Pompano Beach, the proposal means more uncertainty, fewer choices and the possibility of worse healthcare for her 14-year-old daughter, who suffers from Type 1 diabetes.

"I know how managed-care works, and all the doctors I've talked to complain about it. I don't know what it will cover. I don't know what I'm going to have to spend. It's very stressful," King said.

Though nearly no one likes Medicaid now, it's tough to find any recipients, social service advocates or Democrats who don't share King's fear of change. Even many Republicans are concerned -- especially those from the two test areas and Miami-Dade.

"There was never one entity that liked this bill. There was never one time that people came to us and said, 'You and yours are visionaries,'" said former Senate President Jim King, a Jacksonville Republican, who noted the "genuine concerns about the fact that lives -- lives -- are in danger."

## **CONTROLLING CHANGE**

Senators blocked the governor and House's effort to weaken legislative oversight in expanding the reform plan more quickly beyond Broward and Duval. To make sure the plan works, they said, it must first be tested for two years in the Jacksonville area and Broward, which has 191,000 people eligible for the plan.

The Senate, led by Miami's Republican Majority Leader Alex Villalobos, also blocked a proposal to move more Medicaid recipients into HMOs, even if they don't live in the test areas.

The House passed the plan 87-31 after the Senate approved it 26-14, largely along party lines.

"This bill is going to potentially affect 2.2 million people in the state of Florida who don't have the money to come up here and lobby us," said Sen. Skip Campbell, a Tamarac Democrat. ``There's enough inconsistency in this bill, which will make it a bad bill, which will allow things to happen that we don't intend to happen."

Few understand the arcane fix to the complex program that has life-and-death consequences for one in eight Floridians. Medicaid pays the healthcare of nearly half the state's pregnant women, almost a quarter of its children and about two-thirds of its nursing home residents.

## **AVOIDING HMOS**

Anita King, a Broward County health worker, spent the past five years mastering Medicaid, making tearful calls to doctors, bureaucrats and hospitals and waiting for hours in hospital rooms and doctors' offices.

She said she deliberately avoided the existing Medicaid HMOs in Broward because none has pediatric endocrinologists who will see her daughter.

Only three of the specialists in Broward, she said, have seen her daughter on what's known as a fee-for-service basis -- an arrangement that the Medicaid reform plan will abolish.

"It took me all this time to find a doctor for my daughter, and now I just don't know what to expect," King said.

Bush's healthcare chief, Alan Levine, said recipients can expect better care. In contrast to King's experience, Levine points to people in rural counties without HMOs, such as Gadsden, where children couldn't find specialists.

Levine cites a number of studies showing results are better and cheaper when recipients receive care that closely monitors them to keep them well. He said people in fee-for-service arrangements get far fewer checkups for themselves or their kids.

"The overall big picture we have is everyone's in a system that's coordinated," Levine said. 'In a coordinated system you have a case manager who says, 'You know what? This child needs help. We're going to take him to . . . where he gets assessed and treated.' "

Managed-care doesn't always live up to its promises, though, and doctors grouse that HMOs now cut their fees by 25 percent. Many worry that companies mindful of the bottom line could skimp on services. Critics also point to a managed-care experiment for dental services in Miami-Dade in which fewer children received dental checkups than before.

Under Bush's proposal, an array of health networks serving specific Medicaid populations -- such as those with AIDS or diabetes -- would crop up.

The networks would have doctors, specialists and care centers that would manage the health of recipients.

By getting regular check-ups, recipients would stay healthy and would win the right to access a special account to buy health needs, such as eyeglasses.

## **FUNDING CAP**

But there's a catch to the plan.

To get approval from the federal government, which oversees the program and pays 59 cents of every \$1 in Florida Medicaid, the state agreed to cap annual spending increases per person at 8 percent for most -- about 1 percent higher than the historical rate, according to Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration and legislative budget writers.

House bill sponsor Holly Benson, a Pensacola Republican, said the reform could save \$1.3 billion over five years while accommodating future growth for new enrollees.

Sen. Mike Haridopolos, a Melbourne Republican, said he believed it would all work out, just like welfare reform in 1996. He said he was certain that ``by doing nothing, there will be cuts to education, there will be cuts to road spending, there will be cuts to healthcare."

Senate Minority Leader Les Miller, a Tampa Democrat, countered that Republicans have supported billions in tax breaks, and said the plan to turn over decision-making to private companies was a "backdoor" effort to limit services.

"Who will be the losers? It will be the sickest, the oldest and those children who did not ask to be born poor," Miller said.

Anita King echoed a similar theme, saying there seems to be a contradiction in the state promising better health care on one hand and lower spending on the other.

"They're only going to change it to make it more cost-efficient," King said. ``How can I honestly believe this will be best for my daughter?"

# 7 kids removed from home

Friday, December 09, 2005

By Nate Reens  
The Grand Rapids Press

IONIA -- As William Stoakes sits in jail accused of molesting two adopted daughters and a girl under his foster care, an Ionia judge removed seven children from his wife's custody Thursday. Ionia County Probate Judge Robert Sykes Jr. ordered the five adoptive and two biological children of Stoakes and his wife, Angela Stoakes, to become temporary wards of the state, said Jessica Wierckz, the county's chief assistant prosecutor.

While Angela Stoakes apparently was unaware of the sexual abuse allegedly committed by her 42-year-old husband, she has continued to support him and deny the disclosures made by the teenagers, ages 13, 16 and 17, Wierckz said. The foster daughter already has been removed from the house.

"She doesn't want to believe the abuse and could have the power to manipulate what they say in any future testimony," Wierckz said.

William Stoakes faces three counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and two counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct stemming from alleged incidents involving the three girls that occurred in September and October.

He has been jailed since his October arrest, and two cases already have been bound over to circuit court. Stoakes is set for a probable-cause hearing in the third case Tuesday.

Angela Stoakes was not home when the abuse allegedly happened, authorities said.

She declined to comment on the charges through a person who answered the phone at her home Thursday.

Prosecutors allege Angela Stoakes, although not charged, failed to protect the children.

The recent accusations aren't the first time William Stoakes has been investigated for possible sexual abuse, Wierckz said. The Family Independence Agency looked into allegations in 2003, but criminal charges weren't issued.

Officials from the Michigan Department of Human Services, which oversees foster care parents, could not be reached for comment.

The situation is unfortunate for children who already have experienced a rough life, Wierckz said.

"It's sad because these children have been abused, and now it happens again," she said.



## Children removed from home where they were allegedly abused

By BRANDON LACIC

Sentinel-Standard editor

IONIA - Adopted and foster children who Ionia police and prosecutors claim were sexually abused by their adoptive father were ordered removed from the care of the man's wife Thursday afternoon.

William Stoakes, 42, of Ionia, is charged with two counts of 1st degree criminal sexual conduct; two counts of 2nd degree criminal sexual conduct and furnishing minors with tobacco, a misdemeanor. Each CSC 1st degree carries up to life in prison, while each CSC 2nd is a 15-year felony.

The charges center around Stoakes' two adopted daughters and a foster child in his care.

At a probable cause hearing in Ionia County Probate Court Thursday Judge Robert Sykes Jr. ordered that the three teen-aged girls allegedly molested be removed from the Stoakes' home by the Department of Human Services.

The children will be placed in foster care or could eventually be placed with relatives once the DHS investigates relatives' homes.

At the probable cause hearing DHS officials argued Stoakes' wife could be coercing the children into retracting statements or otherwise "coaching" their would-be testimonies.

Ionia County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Jessica Wierckz said the wife has had conversations with her husband at the Ionia County Jail and that the prosecutor's office believes the wife may be attempting to sway the children's testimonies.

The Sentinel-Standard is withholding the wife's name since she has not yet been charged with a crime.

Sykes said he determined that it was "contrary to the welfare of the children to remain in the home."

He also said DHS has made reasonable efforts to keep the children in the home.

Meanwhile, it was noted on record that Stoakes' wife failed to take advantage of most of the counseling services recommended for the children by the DHS.

Wierckz said previously that there is no evidence Stoakes' wife knew of any alleged abuse.

Stoakes has been a foster parent for several years and has biological children of his own. In all there was reportedly a total of eight children in his care during the time of the alleged incidents, Wierckz said.

Stoakes was arrested in late October and the charges he currently faces are related to alleged crimes against two of the girls. He has yet to be charged in connection with incidents involving the third child.

Wierckz said Stoakes was investigated for allegations of sexual abuse in 2003. Those incidents were investigated by what was the Family Independence Agency.

Wierckz did not know if the Ionia County Prosecutor's Office reviewed a report of that investigation, but confirmed Stoakes was not formally charged.

Wierckz said the latest charges are a result of an investigation by the DHS and that the "allegations were substantiated

Printable Version

Page 2 of 2

by (DHS)," in October.

Stoakes has had no contact with any of the involved children since his arrest in late October.

# **Detroit Girl Reported Missing**

***14-Year-Old Last Seen Nov. 28***

POSTED: 9:22 am EST December 8, 2005

Police and the family of a 14-year-old Detroit girl reported missing are asking for the community's help in locating the teenager.

Kieona M. Graves (pictured, right) was last seen Nov. 28 at 7:30 a.m. when her father took her to school in the area of Wyoming and West McNichols, according to police. Her family filed a missing report the next day, police said.

Graves was described as 5 feet 9 inches tall, 180 pounds, with brown eyes and brown medium-length hair in a ponytail. She was last seen wearing black jeans, a black jacket, black boots and carrying a brown book bag.

Anyone with information on the missing girl should contact Detroit police.

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# Student Followed By Stranger En Route To School

## *Detroit Police Increase Security Patrols*

POSTED: 12:43 pm EST December 8, 2005

DETROIT -- A 16-year-old girl said she was followed by a stranger on her way to a Detroit high school Thursday morning.

The Pershing High School student said the man who approached her was driving a dark-blue Chevrolet Caprice. She ran to her school -- located at 18875 Ryan Road -- for safety and was not injured, Local 4 reported.

School officials contacted police about the incident.

The man was described as black, in his mid-to-late 20s, and wearing a white skull cap and a brown and tan jogging suit, Local 4 reported. The Caprice he was driving was described as having missing hubcaps and damage to the passenger door.

Police have increased security patrols in the area, Local 4 reported. Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick announced Wednesday that schools would have increased security after recent shootings at two other Detroit high schools.

Pershing High School students said they will take extra precautions. Student LaShawnta Morris said she would run if she sees someone following her.

Anyone with information on the suspicious man should contact Detroit police.

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## Father, daughter face incest charge

December 9, 2005

BY CHRISTY ARBOSCELLO  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

It fit the mode of other alarming emergencies: A worried couple rushed their newborn to a hospital in May, claiming she suffered a seizure in their Utica apartment. But Serenity, then 7 weeks old, was actually a victim of shaken-baby syndrome at the hands of her 24-year-old mother, police said.

And the mother wasn't only the companion of the child's father -- she is his biological daughter. "I believe this is the first time we've come across where a father fathered a child with his daughter and she was basically a willing participant in it," Utica Police Sgt. Dave Faber said. Authorities are searching for Angela M. Moore, who has been charged in an arrest warrant with first-degree child abuse and third-degree incest, and David M. Sterling, 46, also charged with third-degree incest for his relationship with Moore.

Therese Tobin, the chief trial attorney in the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office, has overseen incest charges against adults who abused minors, but this is the first time she's seen charges against two adults who said they had a consensual relationship.

"It doesn't happen everyday," Tobin said.

She said she wasn't sure whether the case set precedent in the county. Since Michigan State Police classifies third-degree incest under criminal sexual conduct, it was unable to immediately provide statistics on how often the crime occurs statewide.

At Mt. Clemens-based Turning Point, which offers programs and resources for domestic violence and sexual assault victims and helps homeless people, Aimee Nimeh, director of community development, said she and the staff have heard of similar incest cases.

"And when we looked more closely to it, there's usually a lot more going on than a relationship between two consenting adults," Nimeh said Thursday.

"Incest sort of falls under the sexual assault umbrella," she said. "Because the man is her father, he already has this sort of societal right of domination. There's already this power differential." Neither Moore nor Sterling showed up for child custody hearings since the incident.

Serenity, who has been recovering from the trauma, which required surgery at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, may have suffered some brain damage and is a ward of the state, living in foster care, Faber said.

Moore's other children from another relationship, who lived with her at the time, now are with their father. Her brother, who also lived with her, is in foster care, Faber said.

Police interviewed and administered polygraph tests on the pair, who openly admitted they were intimately involved, and Moore told police they were engaged. She explained that she didn't know Sterling until she was an adult. They moved in together, and later a mutual relationship unfolded.

Moore told police her baby's injuries were likely the result of her dancing around with the child. Investigators say they believe the baby had been shaken more than once.

If convicted, Moore and Sterling each face a maximum of 15 years in prison on the incest felony. Moore also faces up to 15 years if convicted of the child abuse felony. They have since moved out of Utica, police said.

Contact *CHRISTY OYAMA-ARBOSCELLO* at 586-469-8085 or [arboscello@freepress.com](mailto:arboscello@freepress.com).

# **Bond revoked for sex suspect**

Friday, December 09, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

## **GRAND RAPIDS**

A judge on Thursday revoked the bond of a man who allegedly sexually assaulted children at a licensed day-care center he ran with his wife. Khristopher Cross was free on bond awaiting trial for allegedly assaulting two young girls when he was arrested Dec. 1 by Grand Rapids police for allegedly assaulting a third girl. He has been jailed on \$50,000 bond since his latest arrest. Kent County Circuit Judge Paul Sullivan ordered the bond revoked, and set an evidentiary hearing for next week. Cross also is accused of having child pornography on his computer at home, 2642 Fuller Ave. NE.

# Slaying case delayed

Friday, December 09, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- With the defense needing more time to prepare for her case, Samantha Winkler will return to court in January as she faces a second-degree murder charge in the death of her 2-year-old daughter, Aiyana Cisneros. Winkler appeared Thursday before Grand Rapids District Judge Michael Christensen to waive her right to a hearing within 14 days of arraignment and adjourn the matter. Aiyana was found dead July 19 in her home.

# Charges piling up for man, 39

Friday, December 09, 2005

THE SAGINAW NEWS

LANSING -- A 39-year-old Essexville man awaiting sexual assault charges in Washtenaw County now faces child pornography charges.

State Attorney General Mike Cox on Thursday announced the arrest of Philip E. Champlain on charges of possession of child pornography.

State Police arrested Champlain on Dec. 1. Officers seized computers that contained "large quantities" of child pornographic images from his home, Cox said.

Champlain is to face arraignment Thursday in 74th District Court in Bay City before Judge Timothy J. Kelly. He faces 10 counts of possession of child sexually abusive material, a four-year felony, and one count of using a computer to commit possession of child sexually abusive material, a seven-year felony.

In December 2004, a judge ordered Champlain to stand trial on a third-degree criminal sexual conduct charge, Saginaw News records show. Police claim Champlain sexually assaulted a 15-year-old Whitmore Lake girl, whom he met on the Internet, at her home in June.

In January, Huron County sheriff's deputies said Champlain also used his position as an X-ray technician at Huron Medical Center to obtain personal information about adult female patients whom he later contacted and, in some cases, met for sexual encounters, News records show.

While that isn't a crime, Huron County Prosecutor Mark J. Gaertner charged Champlain with larceny in a building in connection with thefts of medical supplies and records from the medical center.

Investigators alleged Champlain stole "a large amount" of hospital clothing, along with surgical supplies, X-rays and index cards bearing names of deceased former Huron Medical Center patients.

Huron Medical Center officials fired Champlain.



# Parents told signs of child sex abuse

Friday, December 09, 2005

By Nate Reens  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Extended changes in a child's demeanor, eating or sleeping habits could be indicators of sexual abuse and should raise red flags for parents, a forensic interviewer says. Those signs, however, are not iron-clad, and parents shouldn't jump to conclusions based solely on the differences, according to Becky Yuncker, who interviews potential molestation victims at the Children's Assessment Center.

"Everybody has a bad day, but if the changes continue, parents should start asking questions," Yuncker said. "If you notice it, it's worth asking about and trying to see what is going on with your child."

Yuncker spoke to a handful of concerned parents Thursday night at an information session, spurred by the recent arrest of a Northeast Side daycare provider charged with molesting at least three children.

The allegations against Khristopher Cross, who ran an in-home day care with his wife, prompted calls from parents seeking information on how to spot possible sexual abuse.

Among signs that may indicate molestation are:

Regressive behavior, such as returning to thumb-sucking or a potty-trained child having wetting accidents.

A change in appetite, either consuming little or large amounts of food.

Recurring episodes of nightmares and other disruption of regular sleep.

Dramatic difference in attitude.

Yuncker said parents should start at infancy talking to their children about body safety and that children should be encouraged to talk to adults when they believe they are being inappropriately touched.

"Kids do want to talk about it, but they sometimes don't know who to tell or how to tell someone," Yuncker said. "They don't want to see mom cry and dad get mad."

If parents suspect abuse, they should resist asking direct questions because youngsters can be led to disclose abuse that isn't actually occurring.

"There's a fine line to it because you don't want to suggest anything to them," Yuncker said.

"Some of the best questions can be something like, 'Does anybody want you to keep secrets?' or 'When you're (with a person or at daycare) what do you like and what don't you like?'"

## LETTERS

Ann Arbor News

Friday, December 9, 2005

### **Marital status should not affect ability to adopt**

As members of the University of Michigan's Center for the Child and Family's Adoption Study Group, we wholly endorse state Rep. Paul Condino's House Bill 5399 to allow unmarried couples to jointly adopt a child in Michigan. No one argues the value of having a healthy two-parent home to raise a child, but a couple's ability to provide a stable, loving home should be the criteria for eligibility to adopt, not that couple's marital status, especially in a state that refuses some of its citizens the right to marry.

All children - of married and unmarried couples - face potential losses as a result of parent breakups, illness, or death. The child of an unmarried couple deserves no less protection to have both adults with parental rights. Without that protection, those tragic losses can be compounded with children of unmarried couples being denied access to one of the people who has loved and raised them.

Condino's bill would not diminish existing rights for birthparents in any way. And given that 4,500 of the 14,000 children in Michigan's foster care system have a goal of adoption, it is in children's best interest to expand the pool of loving homes to adopt them and to provide safeguards that all children deserve regardless of their parents' marital status.

Kristine E. Freeark, Ann Arbor

Dani I. Meijer, Jackson

Katherine L. Rosenblum, Ann Arbor

# **New childcare facility, preschool opens**

By Mardi Suhs, Cadillac News

December 9, 2005

CADILLAC - Every latch on every drawer has been checked. The health department and fire inspector have checked the facility. Staff credentials, including criminal background checks, are complete.

After four months of hard work, Tracy Trautner saw her dream come true when the doors to the Children's Learning Center, a childcare and Montessori preschool opened to the public on Wednesday.

"Opening a preschool is something I always wanted to do, ever since I graduated from college," explained director Tracy Trautner, the mother of three boys.

Trautner has an early childhood education degree from Central Michigan University. Recently she became a certified preschool/kindergarten Montessori teacher by the North American Montessori Center.

Trautner became interested in the Montessori method of education, which allows children to learn at their own pace.

"In the Montessori method," she pointed out, "the children learn naturally. I structure the environment versus structuring their day. There's an open period of time where they can explore what interests them at their time in life."

Activities at the center will include studies of botany, science, geography, math, language, music and art. In addition to the Montessori curriculum, there will be nutrition, dancing, exercise, foreign language, computers, and plant and animal care.

In the spring the children will plant a vegetable and flower garden.

"I always wanted to do this," she said of opening the school.

"I agree strongly with the Montessori method and I'm really fortunate to be able to bring this to this community. My goal is to provide families an opportunity to experience a different type of education," Trautner said.

The Montessori method of teaching started in Italy over a century ago when medical doctor Maria Montessori developed a new approach after observing young children.

Through her observations and teachings, she concluded that every child is an individual learner and "should be encouraged to work at their own pace on projects they initiate themselves."

**Your Connection**

**WHAT:** Children's Learning Center, a childcare facility and Montessori preschool

**WHERE:** 753 Sunnyside Drive in the education wing of the Sunnyside Baptist Church

**OPTIONS:** Infant and Toddler program for ages 8 weeks to 2 1/2 years; or Montessori Preschool program ages 2 1/2 to 5.

**WHEN:** Morning and afternoon sessions available with drop-off and flextime.

**OPEN HOUSES:** Dec. 14 and 16 from 6 to 8 p.m. and Dec. 17 from 10 a.m. to noon. For information, call 779-9940

[news@cadillacnews.com](mailto:news@cadillacnews.com) | 775-NEWS (6397)

December 8, 2005

## **Man accused of assaulting wife**

FROM RECORD EAGLE STAFF REPORTS

TRAVERSE CITY - Police issued an arrest warrant for a Kingsley man accused of assaulting his wife with a telephone and a fake gun on two separate occasions.

Michael Todd Welke, 37, is charged with two counts of assault with a dangerous weapon and a misdemeanor count of attempting to tamper with a phone line.

Welke's wife told Grand Traverse County sheriff's officials that in October her husband allegedly struck her in the head with a telephone at their home on Clark Road in Kingsley.

Approximately a month later, Welke allegedly assaulted his wife again, this time by allegedly holding an air gun to her head.

The woman told police that Welke cocked the gun and pushed it into her head, causing bruising. If convicted, Welke faces a maximum of four years in prison for the felony assault charges.

# Minimum wage focus of drive

Friday, December 09, 2005

THE SAGINAW NEWS

A grass-roots group says the state must boost the minimum wage to at least \$6.85 an hour by 2007 to make inroads in pulling the "working poor" out of poverty.

The Michigan Needs a Raise Coalition will kick off a statewide petition drive next month to collect 400,000 signatures within six months to put the issue on the November ballot, Danielle Atkinson, a group spokeswoman said at a Saginaw meeting with reporters outside Warren Avenue Presbyterian Church, 612 Millard.

The state has kept the minimum wage at \$5.15 an hour for eight years, Atkinson said.

Minimum-wage earners say it's not enough to make a living, while small business owners have complained that a raise would hurt their bottom line.

Mark S. Kraych, a group member and a Democratic candidate for the state House 95th District, said the initiative needs community groups to help circulate petitions.

# United Way surpasses '05 goals, raises more than \$4M

Nick Schirripa

*The Battle Creek Enquirer*

Months of campaigning and soliciting pledges ended in November, and on Thursday the United Way of Greater Battle Creek announced its 2005 results.

After what officials called an extraordinary campaign, the organization surpassed its goal of \$4.25 million with pledges totaling \$4,528,769.

Tim Kool, co-chair of this year's campaign cabinet, said the cabinet worked hard to increase contributions this year.

"I think it really speaks of the great leadership in this community that's willing to step up and make a contribution," he said.

Kool's father, Preston Kool, was a cabinet chair in 1965 when the organization raised \$603,048, surpassing the campaign goal of \$596,908.

Since 1985, the United Way has missed its goal only twice.

Chris Wigent, co-chair of the campaign cabinet, said the result demonstrates the quality of the United Way organization, as well as the community's faith in the local chapter and the more than 50 programs it helps fund.

"People have confidence in the organization and its leadership," he said. "The area of Battle Creek is a very caring community and very generous in support of the United Way and its programs and agency services."

The Charitable Union is one of those agencies, and interim Executive Director Dick Fink said the United Way funding his organization receives each year is critical.

"Without United Way, there would be no Charitable Union as we know it," he said.

Last year, the United Way contributed about \$125,000 to the Charitable Union, Fink said, and this year's contribution likely will exceed \$130,000.

"It's beyond amazing," he said. "United Way is such an integral part of our success, I can't speak highly enough of the organization."

Charitable Union distributes items such as shoes, clothes, coats, books, diapers and blankets to people in need, Fink said.

In 2004, it distributed 360,000 items to 6,750 people, including about 2,900 children, Fink said. The Charitable Union probably will distribute 450,000 items this year.

"The other thing United Way does is give us a kind of legitimacy," he said. "It tells the community we're operating

under established ethics and our operation is fairly transparent." Snap Inc. preschool and child care center also benefits from United Way.

According to Executive Director Amy Walker, the facility gets about \$30,000 for its preschool program and child care learning center.

Snap has 10 teachers and three administrative employees, Walker said, and some of the United Way funding goes to personnel costs.

"A lot of the expense is supplies for the kids and updated teaching materials," she said. "We probably wouldn't survive without the United Way grant money. Child care is not a money-making business."

United Way officials said it helps fund more than 50 programs through 34 area nonprofit agencies.

*Nick Schirripa covers Calhoun County and Marshall. He can be reached at 966-0692 or [nschirrip@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:nschirrip@battlecr.gannett.com). Read his blog in the News Extras area at [battlecreekenquirer.com](http://battlecreekenquirer.com).*

Originally published December 9, 2005



Posted: 12-8-2005

## United Way raises \$370,219

By JENNA KLOECKNER  
Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

United Way of Mason County fell a little shy of its 2005 fund-raising goal, meaning some of its member agencies will receive cuts in funding.

The fund-raising campaign ended Wednesday, with United Way raising \$370,219.40, or 93 percent of its \$400,000 goal.

"I'm very pleased with everything the community did this year to help the campaign," said Lynne Russell, executive director of the United Way. "But at the same I'm a little disappointed we didn't meet our goal for the third year in a row.

Russell said the economy, tsunami and recent hurricanes may have had something to do with the agency falling short of its goal, but added that "after awhile, something is always going to come up, so we need evaluate why our campaign is not working properly."

Starting in January, United Way will develop a preliminary budget for the 2006-07 funding cycle, to determine where the funds they raised will go. During that time, they will continue to accept donations.

"We will look at each care area to figure out where the current need is in the community," she said. "And then each care area will be given a pot of money."

The four care areas are:

- Basic Needs and Self Sufficiency for Individuals and Families
- Behavioral and Family Health for Individuals and Families
- Nurturing Environments for Children and Youth
- Self Sufficiency for Older Adults

Citizen Review Panels for each care area will then review each member agency's fund proposals for various projects to decide how much the member agency will receive.

Some member agencies will receive cuts in funding.

Russell said whether the cuts will have a significant impact on the community depends on whether the member agencies also receive cuts in federal and state funding as well. If cuts are received across the board, the impact would be greater.

The Citizen Review Panels are comprised of volunteer citizens, and Russell said that anyone in the community is welcome to join a panel to determine where 2006-07 funds will be allocated. Doing so would require a roughly six-hour commitment.

"It's a great way to have a say in what happens in your community," Russell said.

While the official fund-raising campaign has ended, donations are still being accepted.

Contributions may be mailed to United Way of Mason County, 5868 W. U.S. 10, Ludington, MI 49431. For more information call 843-8593.

[jkloeckner@ludingtondailynews.com](mailto:jkloeckner@ludingtondailynews.com)  
843-1122, ext. 307

# **United Way extends its campaign St. Clair County agency waiting for sites to wrap up fund-raisers**

By ERIN KOSNAC  
Port Huron Times Herald

United Way of St. Clair County officials broke tradition during their campaign celebration Thursday night at Port Huron's Thomas Edison Inn. They revealed the division totals as they traditionally do, recognizing significant increases. They tallied the totals to show they had raised \$1,396,202, or about 86%, of their \$1.625 million goal.

But they didn't celebrate the end of the campaign.

Campaign Chairman Bob Cook announced the United Way campaign would be extended until Jan. 19 because several major sites had not reported or finished their campaigns yet.

When the campaign started in September, residents of the Blue Water Area were in the midst of hurricane relief efforts. United Way officials knew campaigns would have to be started later at some companies and corporations to allow them time to regroup, said Cook, plant manager of TI Automotive in Marysville.

Because campaigns were started later, Cook didn't want to include projections in Thursday night's total.

Those with campaigns left to report include Blue Water Automotive Systems, Pine River Plastics, Huron Automatic Screw, Kroger, Meijer, Best Buy, Citizens First and LaSalle Bank.

"I thank everybody who's helped us get as far as we have, and we should be proud of what we've accomplished," Cook said. "And I know in January, we're going to meet that goal."

The 2004 campaign netted \$1.625 million, short of its \$1.7 million goal. Alice Rieves supported the decision to extend the campaign. Rieves is executive director of the Mid City Nutrition soup kitchen in Port Huron, which is one of about 30 agencies that receives United Way funding.

"I'm sure our community is going to step up to the occasion," Rieves said. "We live in a very giving community that, when no matter how bad things get, always seems to come through for us."

Lonnie Stevens, United Way executive director, stressed the campaign wasn't being extended because donations were down, but to give all the campaigns a chance to come in.

"Most of the ones we've heard from are up," she said. "And we're hoping that's what's going to happen with some of the ones still out there."

The United Way of Sanilac County, which ends its campaign Dec. 17, has raised \$105,000, or 60%, of its \$175,000 goal.

Last year, the group had the same goal and raised \$166,000.

Executive Director Kent France said that figure does not include matched

money from the Citizens First Foundation for new donations. But he said the group is still way behind.

"We've gotten a lot of new money this year, but the problem is we haven't heard from our longtime donors," France said. "We really need them to come through or else we're going to be hurting."

*Contact Erin Kosnac at (810) 989-6276 or [ekosnac@gannett.com](mailto:ekosnac@gannett.com).*

Originally published December 9, 2005

# Memories of help long ago spur her donations today

Friday, December 09, 2005

By Matt Vande Bunte  
The Grand Rapids Press

Dawn Guppy does not remember what the Santa Claus Girls brought her nearly 60 years ago. But she will never forget the feeling.

"It was just a thrill to get something, to open something, just to know that somebody cares," said Guppy, 69. "I don't think we would have had anything if not for them."

Santa Claus Girls saved Christmas for Guppy and her seven siblings. The Plainfield Township woman now helps The Press-sponsored charity come to the rescue of other Kent County families with annual donations in memory of her late husband and grandson.

She started after Donald E. Guppy III died in 1993 at age 16 from medical complications stemming from a disability. She added the name of her husband when Donald E. Guppy Sr. died of lung cancer eight years ago.

Ever since, Guppy has made a contribution to Santa Claus Girls. Well, almost every year.

"I didn't do it last year, and then I felt so bad," she said.

So this month, in came a \$25 check from Dawn Guppy.

"It makes me feel good to know they'll be getting something," she said of area children who are in need, just like she was once upon a time.

Donald E. Guppy Sr. ran the Choo Choo Grill, a small diner by the railroad tracks at Leonard Street NE and Plainfield Avenue, for 40 years before his 1997 death. Regulars called him "The Legend," and he was known for a sense of humor his wife remembers fondly.

"They were special people," said Guppy, who has six children and 24 grandkids. "You still miss them after all these years."

An avid hockey fan, her husband was penalty-timekeeper during the inaugural season for the Grand Rapids Griffins.

The state Department of Human Services provides Santa Claus Girls with the names of needy families with children ages six months to 12 years. Other low-income families with children who wish to receive Santa Claus Girls gifts may call 447-9405 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Gift delivery is scheduled for Dec. 17, and 350 volunteer drivers are needed to deliver gifts in Kent County.

Cash donations will be accepted throughout the holiday season. Mail them to Santa Claus Girls, c/o The Grand Rapids Press, 155 Michigan St. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Names of contributors will appear in The Press, so please double check for correct spellings.

To contribute by credit card, call 222-5796 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.

# Volunteers' goal is warm kids from head to toe

## Making a Difference

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, December 09, 2005

By Ron Fonger

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GENESEE COUNTY - The first time Elizabeth Evans dropped off winter hats she had knitted for the Shoes That Fit program, she was so impressed by the scale of the effort and how well it was coordinated, that she did something strange.

A year in advance of the next year's program, she started knitting again.

"I know these kids are going to lose them. The dog's going to eat them. They're going to move and (the hats) will get lost in the shuffle," said Evans, who already has finished about 300 hats for this year's drive.

"I'm just hoping that for this year, those hats will (keep them) warm."

With a few days left until the distribution of this year's shoes, boots, socks, gloves and hats on Wednesday, Evans still is building on the number of hats she will donate in 2005.

There is still time for others to give as well.

A retired speech therapist for the Carman-Ainsworth School District, Evans is one member of Quota International of Flint, which helps promote Shoes That Fit in addition to the Flint School District, local hospitals, churches and other groups.

The Flint program has become the largest Shoes That Fit effort in Michigan and part of a national nonprofit started in 1992 with the goal of providing new shoes and clothes to students so they can attend school in comfort and dignity.

Last year, about 1,000 pairs of shoes and the warm-weather gear were collected and distributed to Flint students and others by 43 volunteers who sorted donated shoes to make sure sizes matched needs at elementary, middle and high schools.

Since the program started four years ago, more than 6,600 pairs of shoes have been given to local children.

Donations are being collected at the Zimmerman Center, 2421 Corunna Road, Flint.

"I'm still in desperate need of hats and gloves," said program organizer Connie Rau, staff assistant for the Flint School District's Youth Projects Inc. and a Quota member.

"The need is there. We've got kids (for whom) this will be the first new pair of shoes they've gotten in their lives," Rau said. "A lot of families just don't have it (and hats and gloves) are those are something very easy to lose. It's something a child can always use."

Evans is one of dozens of people who help the Shoes That Fit program every year.

"It's a very worthy cause. We take so much for granted," Evans said. "People don't know what poverty really is (but when you see it) it gets you moving."

**Still Time to Help**

The local Shoes That Fit campaign continues until shoes, boots, socks, hats, and gloves are distributed on Wednesday. The collection point is Zimmerman Center, 2421 Corunna Road, Flint. The center is east of Ballenger Road.

Items collected are being distributed to Flint School District students and other children who need them.

Details: Connie Rau, (810) 760-1190.